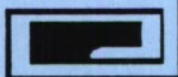


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PERSEREC



**MORAL WAIVERS AND SUITABILITY
FOR HIGH SECURITY MILITARY JOBS**

ADA 208 698

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Defense Personnel Security Research
and Education Center

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The BDM Corporation

December 1988

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| <p>The moral waiver option has been useful to the military services for filling personnel needs in high security jobs. While there is great variation across the services in the numbers of moral waivers accessed and assigned to sensitive positions, the program is especially useful in filling immediate personnel needs. The moral waiver population was clustered into three groupings: traffic waivers, misdemeanors, and felonies/substance abuse. The misdemeanor and felonies/substance abuse categories of moral waivers are burdened with higher unsuitability attrition rates. High school graduation acts as a moderator of the waiver, nonwaiver differences in unsuitability attrition. Services need to carefully assess the policy of assigning non-high school graduates with misdemeanor and felonies/substance abuse waivers to sensitive jobs. Traffic violators appear much more similar to nonwaivers than to waivers on all measures of the study and should probably not belong in a moral waiver category.</p> | | | | |
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MORAL WAIVERS AND SUITABILITY
FOR HIGH SECURITY MILITARY JOBS

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Preface

The improvement of screening procedures for military enlistees who will have access to classified information is one of PERSEREC's primary goals. The relationship between moral waiver status and suitability in high security jobs is an important consideration for the development and improvement of personnel screening procedures. A previous technical report, PERS-TR-88-006, *Moral Waivers as Predictors of Unsuitability Attrition in the Military*, examined the relationship between waiver status and unsuitability for the general military population. This technical report addresses moral waiver status in relation to clearance for a high security job and unsuitability attrition from the military.

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MORAL WAIVERS AND SUITABILITY FOR HIGH SECURITY MILITARY JOBS

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Summary

Problem and Background

Each year the military services assign many thousands of non-prior service enlisted personnel to high security jobs, i.e., those requiring top secret and sensitive compartmented information access. The procedures employed by the services to prescreen personnel prior to requesting a background investigation are described in Crawford & Wiskoff (in press). Approximately nine percent of these personnel have been granted a moral waiver in order to establish their eligibility for service entry. A recent study (Fitz & McDaniel, in press) concluded that accessions who require moral waivers are more likely than others to receive unsuitability discharges. There is a need to evaluate the implications of the DoD moral waiver policy for entry into high security jobs.

Objective

The purpose of this study was to assess the manner in which the services employ moral waivers when accessing personnel for high security jobs and to evaluate the results of these policies on the granting of clearances and unsuitability attrition from service.

Approach

The data for this study were obtained from two Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) files. The Defense Central Index of Investigations is the primary DoD automated data base containing personnel security information consisting of investigative and clearance eligibility data. The DMDC Cohort File was used to obtain background data (e.g., AFQT score, high school diploma, level of education), service entry data (e.g., participation in the Delayed Entry Program, primary service occupation), and unsuitability attrition data.

The study population consisted of all non-prior service individuals who entered the four branches of military service during fiscal years 1980 through 1982 and on whom a security background investigation had been initiated at some time during their military careers. The population included 98,389 individuals. The distribution across service was 44.5% Air Force, 24.8% Army, 25.4% Navy, and 5.3% Marine Corps. Of the total, 9,173 or 9.3% received moral waivers. Over the past ten years, the percentage of moral waivers entering high security jobs has ranged between 7.3% and 10.9%.

Moral waivers were clustered into three groupings: traffic waivers, misdemeanors, and felonies/substance abuse. The three waiver groups and nonwaiver accessions were first characterized in terms of their AFQT scores and percentage high school graduates. Second, analyses were conducted of two service entry variables: the number of months spent in the Delayed Entry Program and DoD primary occupational assignments. A third analysis looked at the process and results of background investigations to obtain high security clearances. A final comparison was made of the unsuitability attrition of personnel from service.

Results

The study showed that all four services relied on moral waivers to some degree to meet their manpower needs in high security military jobs. The services varied widely in percentages of waived personnel and the types of waivers granted. Waivered personnel had higher mental qualifications for enlistment, particularly those who had committed more serious offenses.

A much higher percentage of waived personnel, especially those with misdemeanor and felony/substance abuse offenses, became issue cases and somewhat smaller percentages were actually granted clearances. The percentages of personnel who attrited during the first 48 months of service for failure to meet minimum behavioral or performance criteria was higher for misdemeanor and felonies/substance abuse waivers than for nonwaivers. On the other hand, traffic waivers showed unsuitability attrition half that of nonwaivers. The relationships between waiver status and unsuitability were moderated by high school graduation status, i.e., there were relatively small differences between waivers and nonwaivers within both high school and non-high school graduate categories, but large differences between high school and non-high school categories overall.

Conclusions

The following conclusions follow from the results of the study:

1. The moral waiver option has been useful to the military services for filling their personnel needs in high security jobs. While there is great variation across the services in the numbers of moral waivers accessed and assigned to sensitive positions, the program is especially useful in filling immediate personnel needs, as evidenced by their higher accession rate without entering the DEP and shorter tenure in DEP.

2. The unsuitability attrition rates for those waivers and nonwaivers who are processed for security clearance during their first six months of service are much higher than for those processed later in their first term of service. While the military will continue to access personnel directly into high security jobs, they should recognize the increased costs associated with the higher unsuitability attrition of this group.

3. The misdemeanor and felonies/substance abuse categories of moral waivers are burdened with higher issue case rates, lower percentages of clearances granted and higher unsuitability attrition rates. The fact that high school graduation acts as a moderator of the waiver-nonwaiver differences in unsuitability attrition is still another indication of the pervasive influence of past behavior (perseverance to achieve as measured by high school graduation) on success in the military. The services need to carefully assess the policy of assigning non-high school graduates with misdemeanor and felonies/substance abuse waivers to sensitive jobs. Not only does this policy increase the costs of processing personnel, it also increases the liability associated with large numbers of personnel who first obtain high security clearances, then are discharged for unsuitability and yet possess highly classified information because of their previous military jobs.

4. The traffic violators appear much more similar to nonwaivers than waivers on all measures used in the study. In fact, their unsuitability attrition rate is much lower than that for even nonwaivers. While this present study can only speak to high security jobs, the results confirm the findings of Means (1984) and Fitz and McDaniel (in press) that traffic violators do not belong in a moral waiver category.

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Introduction

Background

Each of the military services establishes standards of entry into its respective organization. One of these, moral fitness, is the moral character standard set by each of the services as a minimum requirement for enlistment. The standard primarily addresses the commission of criminal offenses and substance abuse. Certain patterns of past behavior render an individual ineligible for service; other patterns, which the services deem less serious, do not eliminate an applicant, but may require a moral waiver. To meet specific manpower requirements, moral waivers are sometimes granted by the individual services to those personnel who otherwise offer high qualifications for military service.

Moral Waiver Categories and Policy

There are eight Department of Defense (DoD) categories of criminal offenses and substance abuse for which moral waivers are granted:

1. Minor traffic offenses
2. 1 or 2 minor non-traffic offenses
(misdemeanors)
3. 3 or more minor non-traffic offenses
(misdemeanors)
4. Non-minor misdemeanors
5. Juvenile felonies
6. Adult felonies
7. Preservice drug abuse
8. Preservice alcohol abuse

The specific policies with regard to granting these waivers may vary from service to service. A good example of this policy difference is seen in the traffic offense category. A person with a record of six convictions for minor traffic offenses incurred over a period of more than one year requires a waiver to enter the Marine Corps. The same person can enter the Army or Air Force without a waiver, and needs a waiver for the Navy only if four or more convictions occurred in a single year (Means, 1983).

The services also differ in their classifications of offenses as felonies or misdemeanors. The Marine Corps uses the size of the penalty imposed by the court for the particular offense. The Navy employs the classification (felony or misdemeanor) used by the state in which the offense was committed. The Army and Air Force use

guidelines established by a 1966 Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) study group (Means, 1983).

The procedures and required documentation for obtaining a moral waiver were reviewed by Means (1983, p.1-16). She stated: "Recruiters are instructed to request moral waivers only for individuals whom they judge as fully rehabilitated. During good recruiting periods, the Services tend to stress the principle that waivers should be requested only for applicants who are otherwise highly qualified for Service."

There are two studies that have evaluated the relationship of moral waivers to unsuitability attrition from military service. Means (1983) concluded that "overall, accessions on moral waivers are not much more likely than nonwaiver accessions to be separated from service for failure to meet behavioral or performance standards." Fitz and McDaniel (in press), however, assert that the data which Means presented did not support her conclusion, and that, in fact, her data show a preponderance of evidence that moral waivers are more likely to receive unsuitability discharges than nonwaiver accessions. Additionally, Fitz and McDaniel (in press) analyzed moral waiver status and unsuitability attrition for fiscal year 1982 non-prior service accessions. They found compelling evidence for all services that accessions who require moral waivers for entry are more likely than other personnel to receive unsuitability discharge. Across services, they found that misdemeanor waivers showed the most consistent relationship with unsuitability discharge; traffic waivers showed the least.

The findings of the Means (1983) and Fitz and McDaniel (in press) studies raise questions concerning the utilization of personnel with moral waivers in high security jobs. One could argue for the assignment of otherwise highly qualified personnel with moral waivers to jobs requiring top secret and SCl access. On the other hand, the high cost associated with accessing, clearing and training personnel for these jobs dictates the desirability of retaining personnel once assigned. Additionally, it is particularly imprudent to allow individuals into high security jobs if they subsequently prove to be unreliable or unsuitable.

The purpose of the present study was to evaluate the implications and results of the services' moral waiver policies for entry into high security jobs. For this study we defined a high security job as one that required the conduct of a background investigation as part of the security clearance granting procedure. It should be noted that moral waiver screening is a portion of a much more intensive prescreening conducted by the services prior to the background investigation (Crawford & Wiskoff, in press).

Procedure

Data Files

The data for this study were obtained from two Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) files:

(1) Defense Central Index of Investigations (DCII)

The DMDC DCII file is the primary DoD automated data base containing personnel security information. It contains investigative data on all employees (military and civilian) and clearance eligibility data for Army and Air Force personnel. The file is updated quarterly by data submissions from the Defense Investigative Service (DIS).

In this study, the DCII file was used to identify the study population which consisted of personnel from all four services on whom a background investigation had been initiated at some time during their military careers. The DCII was also used to obtain clearance data on these personnel.

(2) Cohort File

The DMDC Cohort file is a combination of various data elements concerning enlisted personnel from the Military Enlistment Processing Command (MEPCOM) Station Examination and Accession file and the Master Active Duty and Loss files.

In this study, the Cohort file was used to obtain background data (e.g., AFQT score, high school diploma, level of education), service entry data (e.g., participation in the Delayed Entry Program, primary service occupation), and attrition/retention data for the study population.

Study Population

The study population consisted of all non-prior service individuals who entered the four branches of military service during fiscal years 1980 through 1982 and on whom a security background investigation had been initiated at some time during their military careers. These personnel were identified through use of the DMDC DCII file. As shown in Figure 1, the population contained 98,389 individuals of whom 44.5% were Air Force, 24.8% Army, 25.4% Navy, and 5.3% Marine Corps. Of the total population,

9,173 or 9.3% received moral waivers. The percentage of moral waivers entering high security jobs has ranged from a low of 7.3% in FY 76 to an average of approximately 10.5% for the fiscal years 1977 through 1979, and again in 1983/1984. Most recently (1985 through 1987), the average has been 8.2%.

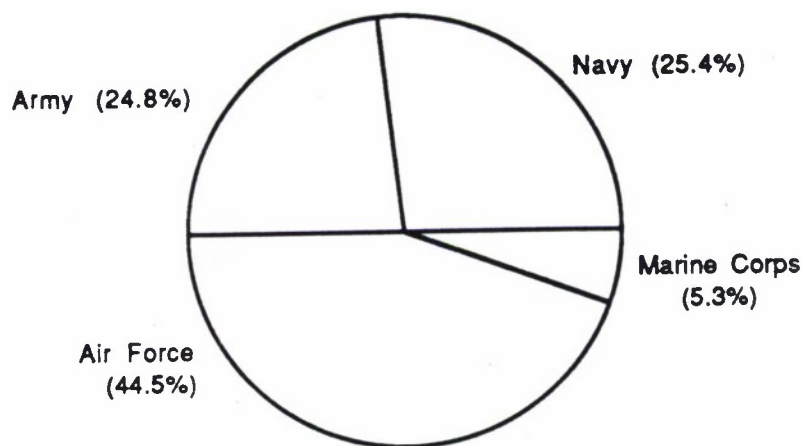


Figure 1. Study Population - percentage of personnel by service (total = 98,389)

Groupings of Moral Waiver Categories

Data on the types and number of moral waivers granted were obtained from the DMDC Cohort File. In this study over 90% of the moral waivers granted were in DoD moral waiver categories 1, 4, and 7. The categories were compressed into three groupings (Figure 2) to obtain appropriate group sizes and to make the analyses consistent with those of Fitz and McDaniel (in press). The first grouping, "Traffic," includes moral waivers issued for minor traffic offenses. The second, "Misdemeanors", includes moral waiver categories 2, 3, and 4 involving minor and non-minor misdemeanors. The third grouping, "Felonies/Substance Abuse," includes moral waiver categories 5, 6, 7, and 8 involving juvenile and adult felonies and drug and alcohol abuse.

| DoD Moral Waiver Categories | Groupings of Moral Waiver Categories |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Minor Traffic Offenses | TRAFFIC |
| 2. 1 or 2 minor non-traffic offenses | MISDEMEANORS |
| 3. 3 or more minor non-traffic offenses (misdemeanors) | |
| 4. Non-minor misdemeanors | |
| 5. Juvenile felonies | FELONIES/SUBSTANCE ABUSE |
| 6. Adult felonies | |
| 7. Preservice drug abuse | |
| 8. Preservice alcohol abuse | |

Figure 2. Groupings of moral waiver categories

Moral Waivers Granted by Service

Figure 3 shows that the distribution of moral waivers groupings across all services were 25.7% for traffic waivers, 44.0% for misdemeanors, and 30.2% for felonies/substance abuse. Table 1 reflects the differences between the services in the numbers and types of moral waivers granted. The Air Force granted the smallest percentage of moral waivers (2.4%) while the Marine Corps had the largest percentage (50.6%). The Air Force and Army granted predominantly misdemeanor waivers, while the Navy used large percentages of both felony/substance abuse and misdemeanor waivers. The Marine Corps granted mostly traffic waivers.

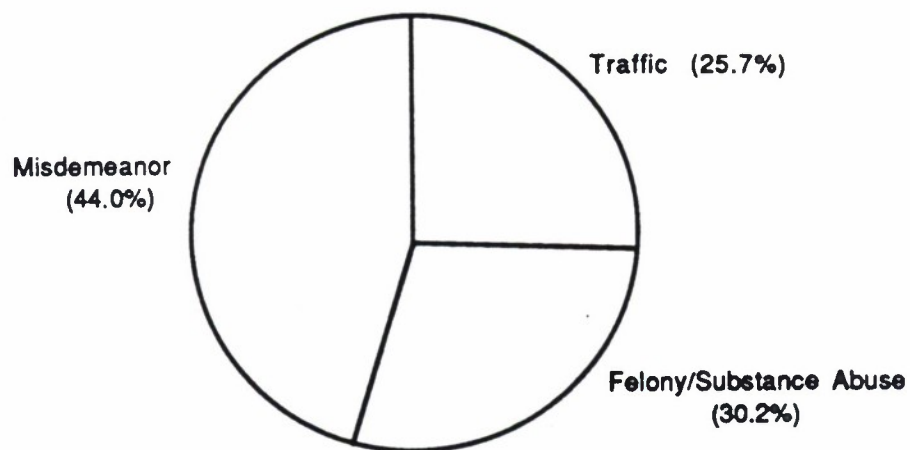


Figure 3. Distribution of moral waivers across all services

Table 1

Moral Waivers Granted By Service

| | Population N | Moral Waiver N | Moral Waiver % of Total | Type of Moral Waiver | | |
|-------|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| | | | | Traffic | Misdemeanors | Felony/ Subs Abuse |
| | | | | % | % | % |
| AF | 43,764 | 1,040 | 2.4 | 1.9 | 82.3 | 15.8 |
| Army | 24,399 | 964 | 4.0 | 5.5 | 92.6 | 1.9 |
| Navy | 24,981 | 4,515 | 18.1 | 1.7 | 42.6 | 55.7 |
| USMC | 5,245 | 2,654 | 50.6 | 83.4 | 13.8 | 2.9 |
| Total | 98,389 | 9,173 | | | | |

Comparisons Between Waiver and Nonwaiver Personnel

The following comparisons were made between the three moral waiver groupings and the nonwaiver personnel for all services and by individual service where data were available.

Background Characteristics

- Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) Score
- High School Diploma

Service Entry Variables

- Months in the Delayed Entry Program (DEP)
- DoD Primary Occupation Code (DPOC)

Clearance Criteria

- Issue case
- Clearance status
- Clearance level

Service Behavioral/Performance Failure

The three waivers groups and nonwaiver accessions were first described in terms of their "quality" as enlistees, using the two attributes most commonly employed, entry-level test scores (AFQT scores) and receipt of a high school diploma.

Second, an analysis was conducted of two service entry variables: the number of months spent in the Delayed Entry Program and the DoD primary occupational assignments.

A third analysis looked at the process and results of background investigations to obtain high security clearances.

A final comparison was made of the unsuitability attrition of personnel, i.e., separation for failure to meet minimum behavioral or performance criteria.

Results

Background Characteristics

AFQT Score

Military aptitude standards play an important part in determining eligibility for entry into the armed services as well as into initial training programs. The services use the AFQT, which is calculated from scores on four subtests of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), to measure trainability.

Table 2 shows that 62.3% of the nonwaiver personnel assigned to security occupations were in the upper half of the AFQT distribution, but that 69.7% of waivers were in the top half. Felonies/substance abuse waivers had the highest AFQT scores followed by those with misdemeanors and traffic violations. Table 3 shows similar data for the individual services. The Navy (12.0%) and Marine Corps (11.5%) showed the largest differences between waivers and nonwaivers in percentage of personnel above the 50th percentile on the AFQT distribution. The Air Force (4.4%) and Army (5.8%) had smaller differences.

As Means (1983) pointed out in her review of the moral waiver process, recruiters are instructed to consider moral waivers for those individuals who otherwise demonstrate high probability for success in military life. It has been shown that the AFQT score is a strong predictor of military trainability (Eitelberg, Laurence, Waters, & Perelman, 1984). It is not surprising, therefore, that the services desire higher level qualifications in order to grant moral waivers, particularly for the more serious offenses.

Table 2

Personnel (All Services) in Upper Half
of the AFQT Distribution

| | N | AFQT Upper Half N | AFQT Upper Half % |
|-----------------------------|--------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Waiver (Total) | 9,173 | 6,397 | 69.7 |
| Traffic | 2,360 | 1,607 | 68.0 |
| Misdemeanor | 4,040 | 2,803 | 69.4 |
| Felonies/Substance Abuse | 2,773 | 1,987 | 71.7 |
| Nonwaiver | 89,216 | 55,574 | 62.3 |

Table 3

Personnel (By Service) in Upper Half
of the AFQT Distribution

| Service | Received Moral Waiver | N | AFQT Upper Half N | AFQT Upper Half % | Difference % |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|--------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Army | Yes | 964 | 645 | 66.0 | |
| | No | 23,435 | 14,317 | 61.1 | 5.9 |
| Navy | Yes | 4,515 | 3,242 | 71.8 | |
| | No | 20,466 | 12,231 | 59.8 | 12.0 |
| Air Force | Yes | 1,040 | 717 | 68.9 | |
| | No | 42,724 | 27,572 | 64.5 | 4.4 |
| Marine Corps | Yes | 2,654 | 1,793 | 67.6 | |
| | No | 2,591 | 1,454 | 56.1 | 11.5 |

High School Diploma

Military research has determined that a high school diploma is the best single measure of a person's potential for adapting to life in the military (Eitelberg et al., 1984). Table 4 shows that, overall, a lower percentage of waivers had a high school diploma compared to non-waivers, 84.4% compared to 90.9%. Traffic waivers (89.8%) were closer in percentage of high school graduates to non-waivers (90.9%) than to the other waived personnel (82.1% for misdemeanor and 82.7% for felonies/substance abuse personnel, respectively).

Data in Table 5 show that all the services accessed personnel without high school diplomas into high security occupations. Of the non-high school graduates, somewhat higher percentages were moral waivers for all services except the Marine Corps, who had approximately equal percentages of non-high school waivers and non-waivers. The combined findings in Tables 3, 4 and 5 indicate that the services are willing to take some risks in accessing personnel, i.e., moral waivers without high school diplomas, if the personnel have higher aptitude levels.

Table 4

Personnel (All Services) with High School Diplomas

| | N | HSG N | HSG % |
|--------------------------|--------|----------|----------|
| Waiver (Total) | 9,173 | 7,731 | 84.4 |
| Traffic | 2,360 | 2,120 | 89.8 |
| Misdemeanor | 4,040 | 3,317 | 82.1 |
| Felonies/Substance Abuse | 2,773 | 2,294 | 82.7 |
| Non-Waiver | 89,216 | 81,127 | 90.9 |

Table 5

Personnel (By Service) without High School Diplomas

| Service | Received Moral Waiver | N | NHSG N | NHSG % | Difference % |
|--------------|-----------------------------|--------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|
| Army | Yes | 964 | 135 | 14.0 | |
| | No | 23,435 | 2,398 | 10.2 | 3.8 |
| Navy | Yes | 4,515 | 896 | 19.8 | |
| | No | 20,466 | 2,471 | 12.1 | 7.7 |
| Air Force | Yes | 1,040 | 150 | 14.4 | |
| | No | 42,724 | 2,975 | 7.0 | 7.4 |
| Marine Corps | Yes | 2,654 | 261 | 9.8 | |
| | No | 2,591 | 245 | 9.5 | .3 |

Service Entry VariablesMonths in the Delayed Entry Program (DEP)

The Delayed Entry Program (DEP) was begun during the mid-1960s to facilitate and regulate draft deferment. The program initially allowed a delay of up to four months before entering the service. Now, all the services use the program extensively to allow recruits to delay their enlistment for up to one year. The program enables the services to regulate training by balancing accessions and training quotas. It also serves as a

recruiting tool by allowing future school guarantees to be given to qualified applicants when current school quotas are full. Table 6 shows that only 9.3% of nonwaivered personnel did not enter the DEP. A somewhat higher percentage of misdemeanor (13.2) and felonies/substance abuse (13.0) waivers went directly into military service without entering the DEP. Traffic violators, although few in numbers, went into the DEP to a greater extent than even nonwaivers.

Table 6

Personnel (All Services) Who did not Enter the DEP

| | N | Not Enter DEP N | Not Enter DEP % |
|-----------------------------|--------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Waiver (Total) | 9,173 | 1,058 | 11.5 |
| Traffic | 2,360 | 167 | 7.1 |
| Misdemeanor | 4,040 | 532 | 13.2 |
| Felonies/Substance Abuse | 2,773 | 359 | 13.0 |
| Nonwaiver | 89,216 | 8,299 | 9.3 |

Table 7 shows, by service, the percentage of waived and nonwaivered personnel who did not enter the DEP. The Air Force and Navy tended to use direct entry of accessions without the DEP most frequently. Close to 20% (19.7%) of waived accessions and 12.7% of nonwaivers went directly into the Air Force. For the Navy the comparable figures were 13.4% waivers and 8.9% nonwaivers.

Table 7

Personnel (By Service) Who did not Enter the DEP

| Service | Received Moral Waiver | N | Not Enter DEP N | Not Enter DEP % | Difference % |
|--------------|-----------------------|--------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Army | Yes | 964 | 48 | 5.0 | |
| | No | 23,435 | 888 | 3.8 | 1.2 |
| Navy | Yes | 4,515 | 604 | 13.4 | |
| | No | 20,466 | 1,812 | 8.9 | 4.5 |
| Air Force | Yes | 1,040 | 205 | 19.7 | |
| | No | 42,724 | 5,423 | 12.7 | 7.0 |
| Marine Corps | Yes | 2,654 | 201 | 7.6 | |
| | No | 2,591 | 176 | 6.8 | .8 |

Waivered personnel also tended to remain in the DEP for a shorter period of time. As seen in Table 8, 44.3% of waivers spent one month or less in the DEP compared to 27.6% for nonwaivers. The average number of months in DEP for waivers was 3.1 compared to 4.0 for nonwaivers.

Table 8

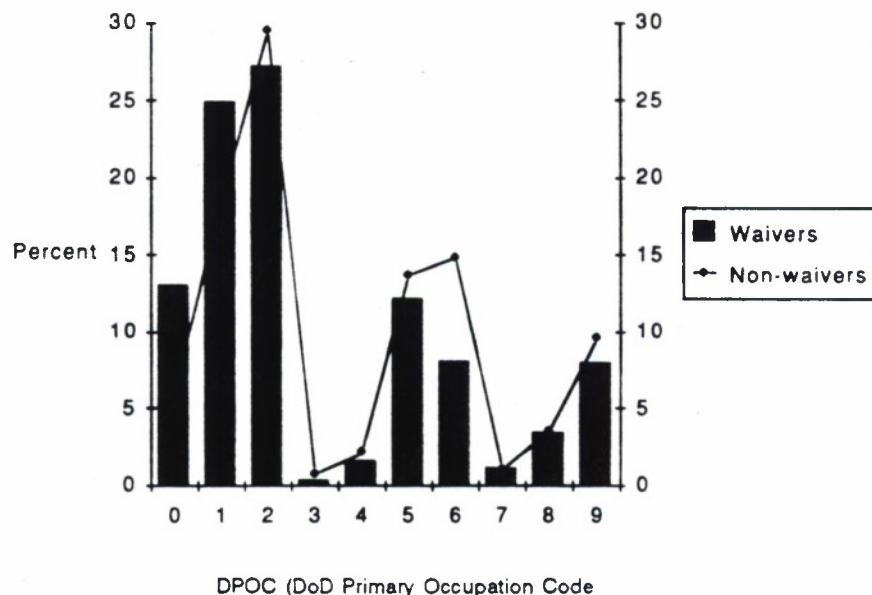
Of the Personnel (All Services) Who Entered the DEP,
Those Who Remained in DEP 1 Month or Less

| | DEP N | DEP < 1 Month N | DEP < 1 Month % |
|--------------------------|----------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Waiver (Total) | 8,115 | 3,596 | 44.3 |
| Traffic | 2,193 | 948 | 43.2 |
| Misdemeanor | 3,508 | 1,582 | 45.1 |
| Felonies/Substance Abuse | 2,414 | 1,066 | 44.2 |
| Nonwaiver | 80,917 | 22,356 | 27.6 |

The above data show that fewer moral waivers were placed in the DEP and they spent less time in DEP. This would seem to indicate that moral waivers were utilized by the services to fill immediate manpower needs.

DoD Primary Occupation Code (DPOC)

The DoD primary occupational area is the occupation for which a service member has been trained or that which is his most significant skill. The distribution of primary occupational areas varied from service to service but was similar for waiver and nonwaiver personnel. Figure 4 shows that overall 77% of the moral waiver people were assigned to four occupational areas: (0) Infantry, Gun Crews, and Seamanship, (1) Electronic Equipment Repair, (2) Communications and Intelligence, and (5) Functional Support and Administration. Sixty-seven percent of the nonwaivers were assigned to these areas. These data suggest that the waiver personnel were used by the services in meeting additional manpower needs when nonwaiver personnel were not available.



- 0 = Infantry, Gun Crews, and Seamanship Specialists
- 1 = Electronic Equipment Repairers
- 2 = Communications and Intelligence Specialists
- 3 = Medical and Dental Specialists
- 4 = Other Technical and Allied Specialists
- 5 = Functional Support and Administration
- 6 = Electrical/Mechanical Equipment Repairers
- 7 = Craftsmen
- 8 = Service and Supply Handlers
- 9 = Non-Occupational

Figure 4. DoD Primary Occupational (DPOC) Areas

Clearance Criteria

Issue Case

If during the conduct of the personnel security investigation any adverse or questionable information was discovered, the investigation is categorized as an "issue-oriented investigation," or issue case, and the scope of the investigation is expanded. It is not surprising, given the pre-existing conditions leading to the issuance of a waiver, that about twice as many waiver personnel became issue cases during the course of their background investigations, 16.9% compared to 8.5%. The highest percentage was for misdemeanors 21.9% and then felonies/substance abuse waivers 15.7%. Traffic waivers became issue cases at a rate much closer to nonwaivers. A separate analysis was conducted for those personnel who were processed for clearance as part of their initial military assignment, i.e., they received their BIs during the first six months of service. The issue case rate for these early BI personnel was 18.9% for waivers and 8.5% for nonwaivers. Table 10 shows that the issue case rate was higher for non-high school graduates than for high school graduates in all categories. Rates for non-high school graduate misdemeanors (24.2%) and felonies/substance abuse (21.5%) were particularly high.

Table 9

Personnel (All Services) Who Became Issue Cases

| | N | Issue Case N | Issue Case % |
|-----------------------------|--------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Waiver (Total) | 9,173 | 1,547 | 16.9 |
| Traffic | 2,360 | 228 | 9.7 |
| Misdemeanor | 4,040 | 884 | 21.9 |
| Felonies/Substance Abuse | 2,773 | 435 | 15.7 |
| Nonwaiver | 89,216 | 7,614 | 8.5 |

Table 10

High School Graduates and Non-High School Graduates
(All Services) Who Became Issue Cases

| | High School Graduates | | | Non-High School Graduates | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| | N | Issue Case N | Issue Case % | N | Issue Case N | Issue Case % |
| Waiver (Total) | 7,731 | 1,234 | 16.0 | 1,442 | 313 | 21.7 |
| Traffic | 2,120 | 193 | 9.1 | 240 | 35 | 14.6 |
| Misdemeanor | 3,317 | 709 | 21.4 | 723 | 175 | 24.2 |
| Felonies/Substance Abuse | 2,294 | 332 | 14.5 | 479 | 103 | 21.5 |
| Nonwaiver | 81,127 | 6,429 | 7.9 | 8,089 | 1,285 | 14.6 |

Clearance Status

A second comparison was made of the clearance status of waivers and non-waivers resulting from the background investigation. The DCII file for FY 80-82 contains clearance data only for Army and Air Force personnel. For more recent years, Navy and Marine Corps clearance data are being added to the file. The Army denies/revokes or suspends clearances pending resolution more readily than the Air Force. The Air Force will instead terminate or cancel a clearance process.

Table 11

Clearance Status

| | ARMY | | | | | AIR FORCE | | |
|-----------|--------|-------------------------|-----|----------------|-----|-----------|-------------------------------|-----|
| | N* | Denied/ Revoked N | % | Suspended N | % | N* | Terminated/ Cancelled N | % |
| Waiver | 862 | 76 | 8.8 | 43 | 5.0 | 1,040 | 79 | 7.6 |
| Nonwaiver | 21,350 | 1,070 | 5.0 | 810 | 3.8 | 42,604 | 1,955 | 4.6 |

*Number of Personnel in DCII file on whom clearance data were available.

As seen in Table 11, the numbers of waived personnel not receiving clearances are small. Nevertheless, on a comparative basis, the Army waivers had their clearances denied/revoked more often than nonwaivers, 8.8% versus 5.0%. They also had their clearances suspended pending resolution more often than nonwaivers, 5.0% versus 3.8%. In the Air Force, 7.6% of waivers had their clearance process terminated or cancelled versus 4.6% for nonwaivers.

Clearance Level

A third clearance criterion investigated was the level of access granted. A considerably lower percentage of waivers in both services were granted the higher security access level, top secret with access to SCI, compared to nonwaiver personnel. Thirty-seven percent of Army and 20% of Air Force waived personnel received this clearance compared with 51% of Army and 31% Air Force nonwaivers.

Separation from Service for Behavioral/Performance Failure

Personnel with inter-service separation codes 60 through 89 on the DMDC Cohort file are classified as having separated from service for unsuitability (i.e., failure to meet minimum behavioral or performance criteria.) The ISC coding system was developed by DMDC to enable cross-service comparisons of separation reasons based on the Separation Program Designator (SPD) codes. ISC codes 60 through 89 include separation for reasons of drug usage, infractions, discreditable incidents, motivational problems, fraudulent entry, etc. They do not include separation due to medical disqualification, entry into officer commissioning programs, erroneous enlistment or other non-behavioral reasons.

Table 12 shows that attrition for unsuitability during the first four years of service was somewhat higher for misdemeanor and felonies/substance abuse waivers than for nonwaivers (13.8% and 14.1% compared to 11.7%). Traffic waivers, on the other hand, showed unsuitability attrition about half that of nonwaivers (5.9% compared to 11.7%).

Table 12

Attrition for Unsuitability (All Services)
During First Four Years of Service

| | N | Unsuitability Attrition N | Unsuitability Attrition % |
|-----------------------------|--------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Waiver Group (Total) | 9,173 | 1,090 | 11.9 |
| Traffic | 2,360 | 140 | 5.9 |
| Misdemeanor | 4,040 | 559 | 13.8 |
| Felonies/Substance Abuse | 2,773 | 391 | 14.1 |
| Nonwaiver Group | 89,216 | 10,422 | 11.7 |

The figures in Table 12 are an underestimate of actual four-year unsuitability attrition for a non-prior service cohort because the DCII data base used in this study contains individuals on whom BIs were conducted during their entire period of service. Therefore, the individuals are included who were processed for security clearances after they had successfully completed some portion of their military service. To obtain unsuitability attrition rates for an entry population, separate analyses were conducted on those individuals in the DCII file on whom BIs were initiated within the first six months of service. This group contained 6.8% waivers and 93.2% nonwaivers. As shown in Table 13, this group exhibited substantially higher attrition rates, 18.1% for nonwaivers, 23.3% for felonies/substance abuse waivers and 26.6% for misdemeanors. Traffic waivers showed a much lower attrition rate of 13.5%. In Figure 5, it can be seen that after the first year of service, nonwaivers and the categories of waivers remained in the same relative position as far as percentage attriting for reasons of unsuitability.

Table 13

Attrition for Unsuitability During First Four Years
of Service of Personnel Who Received BIs During
First Six Months of Service

| | N | Unsuitability Attrition N | Unsuitability Attrition % |
|-----------------------------|--------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Waiver Group (Total) | 3,598 | 826 | 23.0 |
| Traffic | 652 | 88 | 13.5 |
| Misdemeanor | 1,574 | 418 | 26.6 |
| Felonies/Substance Abuse | 1,372 | 320 | 23.3 |
| Nonwaiver Group | 49,323 | 8,936 | 18.1 |



Figure 5. Cumulative percentage of personnel who received BIs during first six months of service and who separated for unsuitability during first 48 months of service.

One additional analysis was conducted to examine whether high school graduation status would act as a moderator of the relationship between waiver/non-waiver and unsuitability attrition. Table 14 shows that unsuitability attrition rates during the first four years of service were in fact far more dependent on high school graduation status than on moral waiver status. Within high school graduates, there was relatively little variation in unsuitability attrition, except for the small number of traffic offenders who showed lower attrition. The lack of attrition variability was also found for non-high school graduates. The striking finding is that non-high school graduates assigned to high security occupations, whether waived or not, had extremely high attrition rates.

Table 14

Attrition for Unsuitability Among High School Graduates
and Non-High School Graduates During First Four Years of Service

| | High School Graduates | | | Non-High School Graduates | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------|------|------------------------------|-------|------|
| | N | N | % | N | N | % |
| Waiver (Total) | 7,731 | 726 | 9.4 | 1,442 | 364 | 25.2 |
| Traffic | 2,120 | 107 | 5.0 | 240 | 33 | 13.8 |
| Misdemeanor | 3,317 | 362 | 10.9 | 723 | 197 | 27.2 |
| Felonies/Subs. Abuse | 2,294 | 257 | 11.2 | 479 | 134 | 28.0 |
| Nonwaiver | 81,127 | 8,355 | 10.3 | 8,089 | 2,067 | 25.6 |

Discussion

There are times when the military services have difficulty in filling specific occupational vacancies. This study showed that the services relied on moral waivers to some degree to meet their manpower needs in a wide variety of military specialties that require a top secret or SCI access. Additionally, the fact that fewer moral waivers were placed in the DEP and they spent less time there, indicates that they were especially valuable in filling the immediate manpower needs. It should be noted, however, that a study by Manganaris and Phillips (1985) showed longer DEP tenure effected considerable cost savings once personnel entered the Army because of the consequent reduction in attrition from the Army.

The services varied widely in percentages of waived personnel and the types of waivers granted. Waivered personnel had higher mental qualifications for enlistment, particularly those who had committed more serious offenses. The data indicate that moral waivers, especially non-high school graduates, have greater difficulty in getting through the background investigation/ adjudication process, i.e., a higher issue case and clearance denial rate. Nevertheless, relatively few of the Army and Air Force applicants (only service data available) were actually denied a clearance.

On an absolute basis, then, moral waivers are valuable in assisting the services to meet their manpower needs. However, because twice as many waivers are declared issue cases and a lower percentage actually obtain clearances, the investigation process is more costly than for nonwaivers.

It is also apparent that moral waivers are not a homogeneous group. Whereas the findings for misdemeanor and felonies/substance abuse waivers tend to be similar, traffic violators look at least as good and sometimes better than nonwaivers.

A major concern when assigning personnel to high security jobs is whether they tend to remain in service or are discharged for reasons of unsuitability. Fitz and McDaniel (in press) found that accessions who require moral waivers for service entry are more likely to receive unsuitability discharges. The present study confirmed their findings for personnel in sensitive jobs, i.e., misdemeanor and felonies/drug abuse waivers showed higher percentages of attrition during the first 48 months of service for failure to meet minimum behavioral or performance criteria than did nonwaivers. Traffic waivers, on the other hand, showed much lower attrition for unsuitability than the other waiver groups and the nonwaivers.

High school diploma status acted as a strong moderator of unsuitability attrition. Among high school graduates, small differences in attrition were found between waivers and nonwaivers who generally were good risks. Similarly among non-high school

graduates, both waivers and nonwaivers were at substantially higher risk in terms of unsuitability attrition. These findings add to the general literature which indicates the pervasive influence of high school graduate status on service tenure (Eitelberg, et al., 1984). Traffic waivers, although few in number, had unsuitability attrition rates approximately half that of the other waiver groups, and of nonwaivers.

Conclusions

The following conclusions follow from the results of the study:

1. The moral waiver option has been useful to the military services for filling their personnel needs in high security jobs. While there is great variation across the services in the numbers of moral waivers accessed and assigned to sensitive positions, the program is especially useful in filling immediate personnel needs, as evidenced by their higher accession rate without entering the DEP and shorter tenure in DEP.

2. The unsuitability attrition rates for those waivers and nonwaivers who are processed for security clearance during their first six months of service are much higher than for those processed later in their first term of service. While the military services will continue to access personnel directly into high security jobs, they should recognize the increased costs associated with the higher unsuitability attrition of this group.

3. The misdemeanor and felonies/substance abuse categories of moral waivers are burdened with higher issue case rates, lower percentages of clearances granted and higher unsuitability attrition rates. The fact that high school graduation acts as a moderator of the waiver/nonwaiver differences in unsuitability attrition is still another indication of the pervasive influence of past behavior (perseverance to achieve high school graduation) on success in the military. The services need to carefully assess the policy of assigning non-high school graduates with misdemeanor and felonies/substance abuse waivers to sensitive jobs. Not only does this policy increase the costs of processing personnel, it also increases the liability associated with large numbers of personnel who first obtain high security clearances, then are discharged for unsuitability and yet possess highly classified information because of their previous military jobs.

4. The traffic violators appear much more similar to nonwaivers than waivers on all measures used in the study. In fact, their unsuitability attrition rate is much lower than that for even nonwaivers. While this present study can only speak to high security jobs, the results confirm the findings of Means (1984) and Fitz and McDaniel (in press) that traffic violators do not belong in a moral waiver category.

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